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DEPT FOR EUR/AGS, INR/EU, AND EUR/PPD FOR YVETTE SAINT-ANDRE

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WHITEHOUSE FOR NSC/WEUROPE

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TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KPAO](#) [AU](#)

SUBJECT: AUSTRIAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS: June 19, 2007

#### Schmied to Present Comprehensive School Model

11. Austria's Minister for Education, Claudia Schmied from the Social Democrats, will unveil her plans for a comprehensive school system for 10- to 14-year-old students later today. During a test stage beginning in fall 2008, the comprehensive system will be introduced in five Austrian regions. However, the Austrian teachers union and the OeVP provincial governors have voiced their skepticism regarding the Minister's plan.

In addition to launching a test of the comprehensive school system in up to five regions in Austria as of fall 2008, Education Minister Claudia Schmied also wants to abolish the rule in her proposed "new middle school model" that student have to repeat a year in school if they fail in one or more subjects, independent provincial daily Salzburger Nachrichten wrote. In an interview with centrist daily Die Presse, Schmid emphasized that "regarding the new middle school, the reform process is already underway, and I invite everyone to participate." Under the new model, students will no longer be split up in groups according to their performance, as is currently the case in some secondary schools in Austria, but will receive "individual support," Schmied explained, adding that she is aware that this is a considerable challenge to the teachers and teacher training as well."

#### OeVP: New Policy for Immigrants

12. The People's Party's integration spokesperson and state secretary for labor, Christine Marek, emphasized that migrants have rights as well as duties. She said security has played too large a role in the current debate over immigration, and called on her party to completely rethink its approach regarding the integration of migrant workers. The Social Democrats responded, saying that the idea would be a change of direction for the OeVP.

Like several Austrian media, semi-official daily Wiener Zeitung reported on OeVP integration spokesperson Christine Marek's call on her party to completely rethink its approach regarding the integration of immigrant workers. The opposition Greens said the development was a good thing and Austrian relief organization Diakonie also welcomed the "new tone" in the integration debate. Diakonie's director, Michael Chalupka, said that those who are legally in the country should have the right to work legally, and added it would be an important step in the integration process. In contrast, the opposition Freedom Party (FP0e) and the Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZ0e) voiced their objections to the proposed change of policy.

## US Offers Condolences

13. A leading Austrian daily briefly noted that on June 18 the United States sent condolences to the family of former Austrian President and former UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim, who died in Vienna last week. ORF radio also reports that the US Embassy in Vienna released a statement yesterday, "four days after Waldheim died." As well as offering condolences, the statement also said the United States "looks forward to continued close relations with Austria and its people."

All major Austrian media, including semi-official daily Wiener Zeitung, independent provincial daily Salzburger Nachrichten, and centrist daily Die Presse report on the statement issued by the US Embassy in Vienna yesterday, expressing its "sincere condolences to the family of Dr. Kurt Waldheim." Meanwhile, domestic affairs writer Wolfgang Sablatnig commented on what he described as a "meager two-liner" in mass-circulation tabloid Oesterreich: "The decision to put President Kurt Waldheim on the watch list in 1987, thus barring him from immigration, the US is refusing to revoke beyond Waldheim's death. The US could not totally avoid giving an official commentary on the occasion of the former UN Secretary General and Federal President. In a meager release, the US Embassy announced on Monday that the US offers 'sincere condolences' to Kurt Waldheim's family. Also, 'the United States looks forward to continued close relations with Austria and its people.'"

## EU, US Lift Embargoes on Palestinian Government

14. The European Union and the United States are lifting their embargoes on aid to the new Palestinian government. After talks in Luxembourg, EU foreign ministers said they would resume "normal relations" with the Palestinian authority immediately. Their move follows the appointment of a new Palestinian government without the militant group Hamas. In Washington, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice promised full assistance to the Palestinian authority and emergency humanitarian aid to Gaza via the United Nations.

ORF radio early morning news Morgenjournal quoted US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who said in Washington that Hamas "has made its choice. It has sought to attempt to extinguish democratic debate with violence, and to impose its extremist agenda on the Palestinian people in Gaza. Now, responsible Palestinians are making their choice, and it is the duty of the international community to support those Palestinians who wish to build a better life and a future of peace." Meanwhile, in a phone call with US President George Bush, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas called for a new effort on peace talks, ORF radio adds. In an report on the situation in the Palestinian territory, centrist daily Die Presse wrote that while the "US and Israel are releasing funds to Abbas," an "isolated 'Hamastan' is on the brink of a humanitarian disaster following the division of the Palestinian territories" between the Fatah-controlled West Bank and Hamas-controlled Gaza. EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana and Foreign Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner said on Monday that the European Union has also said that it wants to resume direct payments to the new Palestinian government. The EU is thus backing the Palestinian emergency government of President Abbas. Ferrero-Waldner explained that the EU would discuss "as soon as possible" the amount of money to be transferred to the Palestinian government with new Prime Minister Salam Fayad.

## North Korea Wants to Shut Down Reactor

15. The International Atomic Energy Agency said it will send a team of inspectors to North Korea next week for talks regarding the shutdown of its nuclear reactor. This is the first concrete step towards Pyongyang's nuclear disarmament and follows the release of frozen funds last week. According to an unidentified North Korean official, North Korea plans to shut down the Yongbyon nuclear reactor in the second half of July.

Independent provincial daily Salzburger Nachrichten quoted the White House as stressing North Korea's decision to allow IAEA inspectors back into the country was a "good step." If the nuclear reactor at Yongbyon is sealed and shut down as planned, Pyongyang will receive a first 50,000-ton shipment out of the promised one million tons of crude oil, the daily explained. The ultimate goal is the resumption

of full diplomatic relations between the US and North Korea.  
Kilner